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ABSTRACT

Home Start II of the Waterloo Community Schools, Iowa, is a program that attempts to remedy developmental lag in underprivileged preschool children by a multi-faceted approach. The program is described as to context, activities, staff, distinctive features, and equipment and material. Discussions are given of community involvement, costs, and evaluation. Tests of the Home Start children indicate that they have made significant gains, compared with other preschool groups, in achieving school readiness. (DB)

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A Waterloo, Iowa, education program, "Home Start II," is one of 11 projects in the nation selected for special recognition, it was announced today by Mrs. Dorothy S. Robinson, Acting Chairman of the President's National Advisory Council on Supplementary Centers and Services.

The project, directed by Helen Thompson, 1516 Washington Street, Waterloo, Iowa, is funded under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which makes money available to local school districts for innovation to solve educational problems.

The "Home Start II" project was chosen in a national assessment of Title III programs conducted by Worldwide Education and Research Institute, Salt Lake City, Utah. It was the first such study of Title III undertaken since the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was passed by Congress in 1965. The 11 projects selected will be publicized by the Office of Education through the Center for Educational Communication as models for other school districts interested in trying innovative programs which have proven to be successful.

Mrs. Thompson will be presented an Educational Pacesetter Award in April, in recognition of her contributions to "experimentation, creativity, and innovation in education," Mrs. Robinson said.

Additional information on this project can be obtained from the project director at (319) 233-5281

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INTRODUCTION

Preschool years are crucial in the development of a child's potential. Failure to identify and correct developmental gaps often results in children's underachievement as they move from grade to grade or in outright school failure.

Home Start II of the Waterloo Community Schools, Waterloo, Iowa, attempts to remedy developmental lag in underprivileged preschool children by a multi-faceted approach. School and community join forces to provide experiences designed to fulfill children's capabilities and serve as insurance against school failure, as well as to aid parents in achieving greater insight into children's developmental needs.

Tests of Home Start children indicate they have made significant gains compared with other preschool groups in achieving school readiness.

The Home Start program has served as the basis for other programs in communities throughout Iowa and for college and university courses in state educational institutions.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Extensive testing of preschool children and their parents, as well as of the program structure itself, is characteristic of Home Start II, as it was of the earlier Home Start I.

Both phases of the Home Start project, attached to Waterloo Community Schools, Waterloo, Iowa, have worked toward the following goals:

. to facilitate children's preschool development so they are more ready for classroom learning,

. to enable parents to become more effective teachers of their preschool children,

. to aid the integration of preschool enrichment into curriculum strategies employed by elementary school teachers,

. to increase communication and collaboration between the schools and other supportive community agencies,

. to increase community understanding of and support for preventive education, and

. to increase understanding of the learning processes and procedures which are most productive in early environmental intervention.

CONTEXT

Two separate groups of preschool children were enrolled in the Home Start I program. In the first, the Horizontal Group, were 40 four year-olds each year for two years or a total of 80 children. These children were given a year of pre-kindergarten enrichment and then entered regular school upon reaching their fifth birthday. In the second, the Vertical Group, were 83 children, who were two years of age when enrolled in the project and who remained in the project for three consecutive years, then

entered kindergarten in the fall of 1971.

In addition to the home visits, during the 1970-71 school year a classroom experience had been scheduled for those children who entered the Vertical Group at age two and who were four and five--only a few months away from enrollment in regular school. This part of the program, was scheduled for two and a half hours daily, five days per week and gave a final impetus to the development of school readiness.

Following continuous testing, the Home Start II project was initiated and moved to concentrate on a program very similar to the 3 year work with the Vertical Group. Home Start II, was divided into two groups, one from Area A and another from Area B.

The Area A groups has a balanced racial composition with 55 white and 55 black children. For this part of the program,

ACTIVITIES

a specialized team coordinates services for children and their parents in health, nutrition, financial information and aid, and other possible family difficulties. The team's diversified approach helps families cope with those factors which prevent children from fully developing their potential.

Paid aides and staff members visit a child's home to aid parent/child interaction. The visitor and mother, together, select educational toys to use in the home to develop visual and auditory acuity, tactile awareness, attention span and verbal and motor expression in the child. This opportunity for the child to have new and stimulating experiences and for the mother to see what can happen in the way of learning is regarded as essential in a program of continuous child development.

A home economist also provides crafts and homemaking classes. In these classes family-oriented activities are discussed and encouraged.

The Area B group is made up of 100 white children from homes less disadvantaged than those of Area A. For the families of children in this group Home Start provides fewer direct services and expects more parental initiative. Three consultants work with the parents, first aiding in enrollment procedures and, later, as the program progresses, offering guidance to help the mothers and/or fathers fulfill their roles as teachers. Mothers may come to the Home Start Center periodically to pick up instructional materials. In specific instances, home visits are made by Home Start personnel.

As a result of collaboration with the staff of the earlier Home Start program, several community agencies have restructured their policies to improve services for young children and their parents. Situations which require help from community agencies are identified earlier and outside assistance is drawn into plans for aiding individual children and their parents.

STAFF

Home Start requires a number of professional and paraprofessional staff members outside those ordinarily found in existing programs of a school district. In addition, the program had to make heavy demands on volunteer help and found that this part of its organizational arrangements were ordinarily workable.

The program requires the following staff:

Professional

director

three teacher/consultants (Area B)

home economist (full time)

social worker (full time)

speech and language consultant (full time)

educational psychologist (half time)

Registered Nurse (200 hours per year)

Paraprofessional

seven home aides

secretary

Neighborhood Youth Corps and Metropolitan Improvement Services assignees

Volunteer

Volunteer help might be used in the following ways:

developing instructional materials

promoting community support by giving speeches, serving on panels, and so on

participating in classroom activities

babysitting during parent meetings

demonstrating crafts as resource persons

Inservice requirements include initial orientation and weekly programs or planning meetings. They also call for yearly re-evaluation sessions to modify programs and expectations. Volunteer and/or paraprofessional aides also require training before assuming their duties.

To achieve follow through when Home Start youngsters enter kindergarten or primary grades, inservice training for teachers is another important requirement.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

An interesting comparison can be made between the program offered by Home Start and Head Start, currently operating in the Waterloo area. Home Start is administered by the Waterloo Community Schools, while Head Start is administered through Operation Threshold, a federally funded agency under the Office of Economic Opportunity.

Home Start enrolls all children, regardless of parent income, as long as the children live in one of the eight target attendance areas, four on each side of the Cedar River; Head Start requires that parents' income be below a given figure.

Home Start begins with two year-olds and works with them until they enter kindergarten; Head Start in Waterloo resembles the earlier Home Start Horizontal program in that it deals with youngsters age four through five.

Parental involvement in Home Start includes weekly home visits by trained aides, combined with home visits by a specialized staff member, depending on the need, such as the home economist, speech consultant, social worker, nurse, or director. Parental involvement in Head Start consists of monthly parent meetings and visits by teachers and aides three or four times a year.

Head Start is equipped to provide a more extensive meal program and health program than is Home Start.

Home Start includes an extensive testing program of individual children, which Head Start does not.

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EQUIPMENT AND MATERIAL

Instructional materials used in this program include more than 300 varieties of toys, games and miscellaneous creative materials, ranging from scissors, paper and paints to rhythm sticks, and from puzzles to alphabet cards to

preschool readers.

In the mothers' program, foods and other necessary materials must be purchased to teach basic cookery, meal planning, and nutrition. Various supplies--fabric, patterns, needles and thread, knitting yarn, crochet thread and decorative materials for holidays--are used in parents' sewing and craft classes.

Finally, the project nurse must be equipped with the supplies needed for first aid and basic health maintenance.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Community cooperation appears to have had a considerable part to play in the success of this program. As one example, much of the work with children in the homes had been done by volunteers who come from many areas of the community.

The project's Third Year Application for Continuation lists 29 community agencies which have helped in various ways with the program. These include the Waterloo Community Schools and other area schools, the University of Northern Iowa, Black Hawk Day Care, Social Welfare Services, churches, Church Women United, Mental Health Services, Legal Aid, Work-Study Project, Project ABC, Junior Service League, Jaycee-Ettes Waterloo-Cedar Falls Optometrists, Neighborhood Youth Corps, YWCA, Vocational Rehabilitation, Hawkeye Tech, Black Hawk County Extension Home Economist, Medical Services, Black Hawk Medical Society, opthalmologists, pediatricians, Service Clubs, Conestoga Council, the Mayor and city offices, and United Housing.

Community understanding and support of Home Start goals can, in part, be gauged by the local district's determination--

despite a tight budget--to assume a greater share of its costs. Local news media have given coverage to the project in a number of articles. As a result, public awareness of the need for early educational intervention has become steadily more apparent.

COSTS

Costs for the Horizontal Group and the Vertical Group of the 1970 Home Start program--involving a total of 121 children--were slightly more than $111,000. Costs of the Home Start II program--for 200 children--will be approximately $129,000, about $18,000 more for an additional 79 children. Per pupil costs over the three-year period are estimated at $2,097.

A further breakdown of costs for 1971-72 shows instructional materials totaling $10,765; testing materials and services, $2,021; speech and language consultant materials, $240; home economics supplies, $750; and nursing supplies, $104.

To reduce costs, some home-bought or home-made toys and games can be used as substitutes for educational toys. For example, cardboard carpentry made by parents and youngsters has increased the variety and number of toys available. Dolls and puppets made by volunteers can also be substituted.

If available in sufficient quantity in the local district, tests and testing materials other than those of the Home Start program could be used, thus making a savings in this part of the program. Other costs related to the extensive testing program, however, are for computer services on a contracted basis.

EVALUATION

Children entering the Home Start programs undergo extensive testing. Home Start II, of course, was initiated only this

school year and testing of the children in this program is still underway.

Considerable data, however, have already come out of testing of children in the Vertical Group of Home Start I, on which the current program is based. These children received the Iowa Tests of Preschool Development, Levels I and II, which are nonstandardized, in their homes every six months. Results from these achievement-oriented tests, which emphasized toys and games, were used to formulate individualized preschool enrichment involving all family members.

The Stanford-Binet test was administered to individual children approximately six weeks after they enrolled in the program.

The LRS Seriation Test was administered for diagnostic remedial purposes as the children began their pre-kindergarten classroom enrichment, which reinforced continuing emphasis on fostering growth within the home.

Standard group tests--the Primary Mental Abilities Test and the Cognitive Abilities Test--were given when the children turned five.

To provide comparisons with control groups, two sets of data were obtained: Primary Mental Abilities Test scores for all first grade children who resided in the same attendance areas, and PMA scores for older brothers and sisters of project children, who had not themselves participated in Home Start.

From this testing program a number of impressive results were obtained. Significant gains were scored in the PMA test by program children as compared with findings from an earlier administration of the Stanford-Binet.

The type of program determined the extent of gain: Horizontal Home Start children secured gains which were modestly higher than those of their older non-Home Start siblings; much larger and statistically significant gains were observed in comparing scores of Vertical Home Start children and their older non-Home Start siblings. (Total PMA: Horizontal Home Start Whites 102.6, their siblings 100.2; Vertical Home Start Whites 113.3, their siblings 103.4; Horizontal Home Start Blacks 102.4, their siblings 99.3; Vertical Home Start Blacks 100.9, their siblings 93.5.) PMA scores of Horizontal Home Start subjects and of all siblings were secured from standard first grade group testing; Vertical Home Start Children were tested on the PMA when they reached their fifth birthday.

Findings from this experiment also revealed that a program such as Home Start, which is experimentally based and can accept only limited numbers of participants, may be likely to draw subjects which are not entirely representative of the community. For example, the Horizontal program could accept only a limited number of participants and more alert parents presumably enrolled soon enough for their children's participation.

On the other hand, no limits were placed on Vertical Home Start enrollment and this appears to have substantially modified the characteristics of many Vertical program participants. As one illustration of this, the reader is invited to note the relatively lower score of Vertical Home Start blacks, but the substantially wider differences between these children and their siblings (which was not the case with Horizontal Home Start blacks and their siblings)

One program goal was that of improving parents' effectiveness as teachers of their preschool children. That this goal met with considerable success was demonstrated by the interest shown by parents in enrolling their children in the preschool classroom for four-year-olds; also by their enthusiastic participation in planned bus tours and field trips; and by the fact that toys were returned, usually in good condition. Most importantly, it was seen in greater parental insights, which enabled them to stimulate and guide the learning of their children more effectively. All of the eligible younger brothers and sisters of Home Start I participants are enrolled in the current program.

Adapted versions of the Home Start program have been established in a number of Iowa Communities, including Des Moines and Iowa City. The Home Start staff has also been called upon for participation in preschool institutes sponsored by the Iowa Department of Public Instruction and in general planning of preschool programs at the University of Iowa, State University of Iowa, and the University of Northern Iowa. Additionally, the Home Start staff has contributed to program development in various Head Start programs in the state.

Home Start staff members have also presented papers at a number of conventions including the state and national meetings of the International Reading Association, Iowa Federation of Council for exceptional Children and the Midwest Regional Conference on Social Studies.

For further information -

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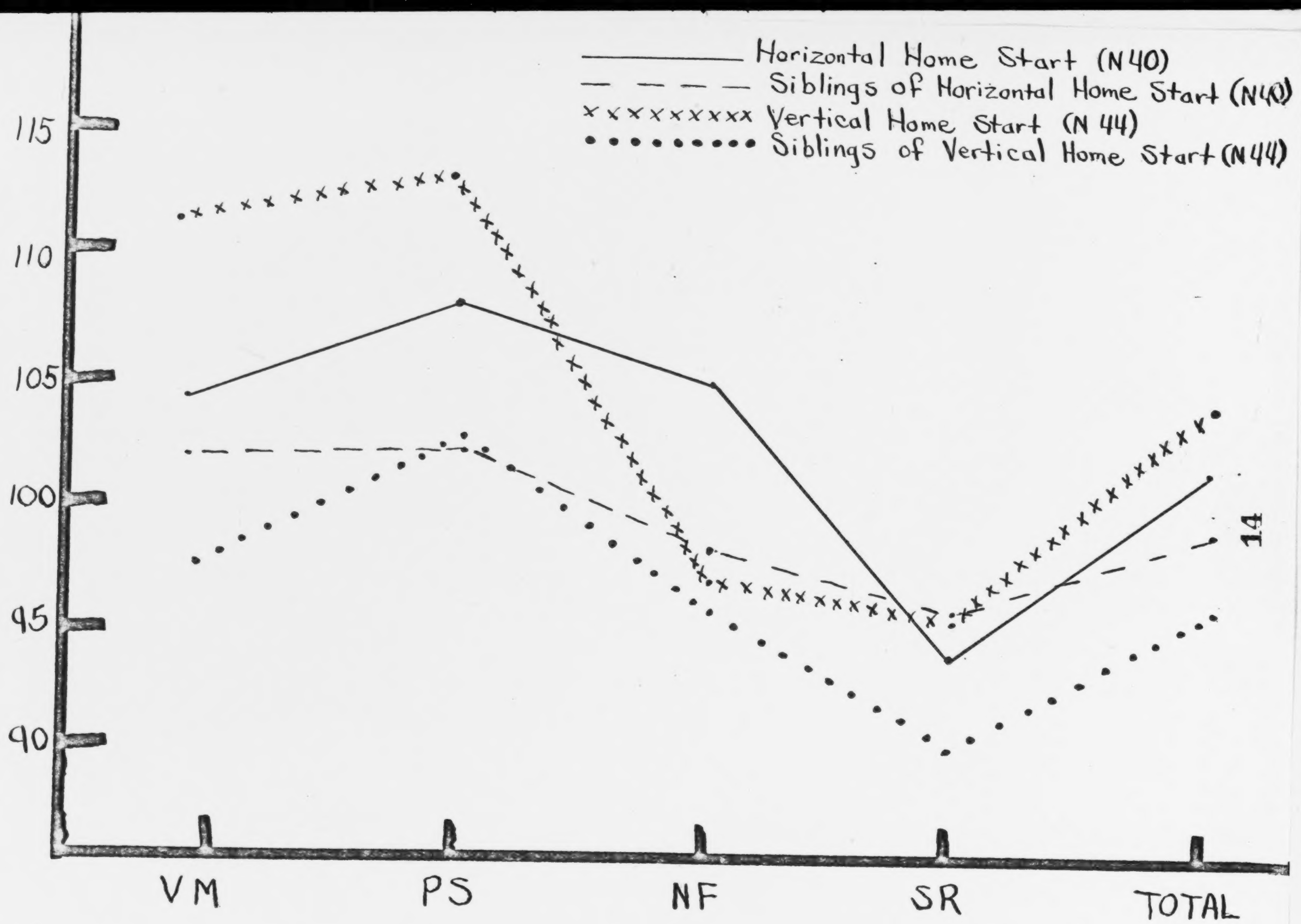
Horizontal Home Start (N40)
Siblings of Horizontal Home Start (N40)
Vertical Home Start (N 44)
Siblings of Vertical Home Start (N44)
115
110
105
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95
90
VM
PS
NF
SR
TOTAL
PMA SUBTESTS and TOTAL